

Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law Library LexisNexis® Tutorial

This is a *very basic* introduction to using Lexis to find cases about a particular set of facts or issues of law. This tutorial is meant to facilitate the learning of:

- how to register your activation code and sign on,
- choose databases,
- enter a search,
- review search results, and
- find cases by name or citation.

Later training by the Lexis representative will build on these skills.

Step 1	<p>Point your browser to http://www.lexisnexis.com/lawschool/</p> <p>The sign-on screen appears. If you have not yet done so, follow the Register your Activation Code link to perform a one-time registration of your seven-digit code and create your own custom ID and password for future access.</p> <p>In the top field labeled LexisNexis® Custom ID enter your Lexis ID. In the field labeled Password, enter your password. Click on the button adjacent to the Password field. If you are using a public machine (e.g., in the labs or the library) do <i>not</i> click on the box labeled Remember My Sign On Information.</p>
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After you have signed on, you will view the **Law School Home** tab of the **LexisNexis for Law Schools** introductory screen. To begin research, click on the **Research System** link located on the right hand side of the screen.

From here, we will select a database containing the documents that will address our research needs. A Lexis database contains a group of related documents. They may be related by jurisdiction (e.g., North Carolina or Federal), subject (e.g., environmental), or type of material (e.g., law reviews). Our first task will be to find case law for North Carolina.

Step 2	<p>To locate the file that contains North Carolina cases, click on View more sources then click on the North Carolina link .</p> <p>Now click on View more sources at the bottom of the Find Cases link, and finally click on NC Cases, Combined to go directly to the screen where you will enter your search.</p>
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Now that you've selected a database, the next step is to choose the type of search you want to perform, either a Boolean **Terms and Connectors** search, a **Natural Language** search using Standard English, or a Google-like **Easy Search**.

Step 3	Make sure the Terms and Connectors button just above the search box is selected. Enter the following search in the Enter Search Terms query box: dog or canine w/25 sniff! w/50 drug or mari*uana or cocaine or controlled substance
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- Notice that Lexis differs from Westlaw in requiring an **or** between words to find words in the alternative (e.g., either **dog** or **canine** will satisfy your search), and Lexis does not require phrases to be enclosed in quotation marks (e.g., Lexis searches **controlled substance** as a phrase).
- The connectors **w/25** and **w/50** (find the terms flanking the connector within 25 and 50 words, respectively, of each other) are similar to Westlaw's **/#** (word proximity within # words). Lexis also allows you to search for words occurring within the same sentence (**w/s**) or the same paragraph (**w/p**), similar to Westlaw's **/s** and **/p** connectors.
- The root expander (!) and asterisk (*) operate the same for Lexis and Westlaw. The search **sniff!** searches variations of the word, such as **sniff**, **sniffing**, **sniffed**, or **sniffer**. Lexis automatically retrieves both the singular and plural forms of your search terms. The wild card * allows for single character variants in spelling, such as **marihuana** or **marijuana**.

Step 4	Click on the Search button next to the box where you've entered your terms and the first case will appear in full-text. Click on the Cite link to the right of View for a complete list of your search results.
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- The **Terms and Connectors** search ranks the documents from highest to lowest court and in reverse chronological order. All of the North Supreme Court cases will appear at the top of your search results before any of the Courts of Appeal cases.
- Notice that Lexis includes an **OVERVIEW** of each case—a one-sentence description of the main legal issue decided. Also shown are **CORE TERMS**, which are important words or phrases extracted directly from the text of the case, providing another tool to quickly evaluate relevancy.
- If **Hide Hits** appears at the top center of the list of results, you will see your search terms bolded in context. Click on **Hide Hits** to remove this display from the screen. If, on the other hand, **Show Hits** is at the top of the list of results, your terms will not appear. Click on **Show Hits** to display the search terms in

context. You can evaluate the relevance of your search results reviewing the **OVERVIEW, CORE TERMS**, and search terms in context.

The colorful symbols on the left refer to the treatment given each case in the Shepard's citation system. Shepard's enumerates references to a particular case cited favorably or unfavorably by subsequent decisions, and can alert you to the fact that the courts have positively or negatively treated a case. If you place your cursor over a symbol, a box will appear explaining the meaning of the symbol. The red stop-sign symbol, for example, indicates negative treatment in a subsequent case.

If you want to look at the full text of your case, click on the blue hyperlinked name of the case. If you'd like to see more of the text surrounding your search terms, click on **KWIC** at the top left of the results list. **KWIC (Key Words In Context)** displays 25 words before and after your search terms, similar to displaying **Terms** in Westlaw.

Step 5	On the top left of the screen, click on the Search tab. You will return to the Sources screen.
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We are going to do a **Natural Language** search about sniff dogs in the context of students and school lockers. Most of these cases are from Federal Courts, so we will change our database to one that contains Federal cases from the District Courts, Courts of Appeals, and the U.S. Supreme Court.

Step 6	Click on Federal Court Cases, Combined under the Cases – U.S. link. The search box will appear. If the search we just completed appears in your search box, highlight it and delete it. Click on the button for Natural Language .
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A **Natural Language** search allows you to enter a description of the issue in Standard English using terms that describe the main concepts. You don't need to use connectors such as **AND, OR, w/s**, etc.

Step 7	Type the following question as a new search into the Enter Search Terms box: can sniff dogs or sniffer dogs be used to search students or school lockers Click on the Search button.
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When your search results appear, click on **Cite** to the left of **View** to retrieve a full list of cases. The number of cases retrieved depends on the default number specified in the **Preferences menu**. (Go to **Preferences** at the top right of your screen to change the

default number for future **Natural Language** searches.) Review the relevance of these cases using the same techniques you used for North Carolina cases. (You may want to click on **Hide Hits** to make browsing easier.)

The retrieved documents are ranked by statistical relevance, with the document most closely matching your search ranked first. The order can be changed to rank the documents by date in the **Preferences** menu. Not all of the search terms need to appear in each retrieved document, because relevancy is determined by a complex algorithm. For example, search terms that appear relatively less frequently throughout the database are weighed more heavily than more commonly occurring words.

Step 8	Now click on the Search tab at the top left of the screen to return to the Sources menu. Pull down the menu near the top labeled Recently Used Sources .
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The **NC Cases, Combined** and **Federal Court Cases, Combined** sources have been saved, eliminating the need to search or explore the **Sources** directory to find these databases again. Simply choose the source name and click on the **Go** button to perform another search in the previous source.

Step 9	<p>To retrieve a case by citation, click on the Get a Document tab near the top of the screen. The Citation button should be selected by default, and the Full Text option under the search field should also be selected. The Case Brief option merely provides a brief summary of the relevant points of law of the case for which you search.</p> <p>Enter the case citation 587 F. Supp. 1406 (with or without periods) and click on the get button.</p>
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You may use any of a case's parallel citations, official or unofficial, to retrieve the opinion. You may also search for other items, such as law review articles or statutes, using this feature if you know their citations. If you are uncertain about the correct format for a citation, click on the **Citation Formats** link next to the **Get a Document** query box.

Step 10	<p>To retrieve a case by the names of the parties, click on the Get a Document tab and then on the Party Name button.</p> <p>Enter Swindell as one of the parties and Overton as the other party (the order doesn't matter). Choose State Courts, then North Carolina as the jurisdiction on the pull-down menu. Click on the Search button.</p>
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Step 11

End your session by clicking on the **Sign-Off** tab on the top right of the screen.